



BELOW: Around a truly discreet Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice like Louis Butler, politicians get understandably tongue-tied, so Ald. Tony Zielinski (left) settles for comparing ties Butler led the MCLC induction. See Page 10.



A teacher prepared
LEFT: Civil rights legend Norman Hill (front left) waits his turn to inspire a new generation at a Milwaukee APRI gathering. See Page 4.

Unsettled at county
ABOVE: After overwhelmingly rejecting a new contract, transit drivers take to the Downtown streets to make their issues public. See Page 2.

AFL-CIO MILWAUKEE

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MILWAUKEE COUNTY LABOR COUNCIL, AFL-CIO

Vol. 67, No. 4



MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN



Thursday, April 26, 2007



(USPS 350-360)

Can anything cure Milwaukee job crisis?

A massive intervention

UWM prof insists nothing less will attack joblessness

Prof. Marc Levine's latest report might seem the Gothic horror novel of Milwaukee joblessness.

Touring his bleak house of the black male population (though he actually looks at all the community's jobless) makes a reader want to put on a necklace of garlic and move to some more congenial location - like Transylvania.

But Levine's facts SHOULD scare us - not to move away but to take far more progressive and urgent action than he is seeing among public officials and corporate leaders. He scoffs at all this touting of training and higher education as an automatic solution.

The director of UWM's Center of Economic Development supports his case in "The Crisis in Black Male

Joblessness in Milwaukee: Trends, Explanations and Policy Options."

There, Levine quotes statement after statement that suggest these business leaders, and even partnerships of labor and management, think all the necessary jobs are already here or have bought into "training is the answer."

"I think such claims are extravagant," Levin said in an interview. "Where I would quibble is whether they are creating any jobs" rather than linking trained residents to the jobs. "Which is what we need."

The mayor's office and many others in workforce development agree with Levine in many areas but think he has missed or too quickly dismissed some key points about their efforts. See related story.

Likewise, all the talk about a new regional cooperation requires aggressive steps more

Prof continued Page 13

SPECIAL SALUTE BUILDING & CONSTRUCTION TRADES

All workforce stories by
Dominique Paul Noth
Labor Press editor

Mayor seeks to make big difference

The political upside for taking over the county's Workforce Development Board starting July 1 is that all players at the table have to go through City Hall and that an elected official, Mayor Tom Barrett, has the biggest say about how they pool money, coordinate resources and get things done.

That, of course, is also the political downside.

"I think most people are too smart to expect big gains in just nine months," said Paul Vornholt, the mayor's point man on labor and workforce issues, asked to look ahead to the April 2008 reelection campaign.

"But if two years from now nothing good has happened, look out."

Politicos calculating from outside the mayor's office say the downside actually looms largest, so long as it taken to entrench joblessness in the city, and how tied improvements are to forces beyond City Hall.

The mayor is further on the hook because he can't separate workforce development from a range of other issues that fall in

Mayor continued Page 14

A model that succeeds

WRTP flourishes the numbers that convince companies

The most successful program hooking the minority community to good-paying jobs has been occasionally blamed for distracting with its achievements from the larger urgency in Milwaukee to create many many more such jobs.

Supporters of the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership see it differently.

Emphasizing that the priority is indeed to attract and create thousands of more jobs, Mayor Tom Barrett pointed out the "unfortunate reality" that training workers was the integral other shoe.

You don't hear what was a common saying in the 1960s, he said, that Milwaukee "has the best workforce in America." Today the jobs won't come until we get back to that perception.

On April 16 Barrett joined businesses, contractors and associations, along with teachers and union leaders, who flooded a hundred strong into the cramped but sunlit entrance of WRTP's new Center of Excellence (shared by WRTP and its apprentice preparation program known as BIG STEP)

It was a media event, the first-ever press conference for WRTP, celebrating notable 2006



Eric Parker, head of WRTP

numbers: 473 community residents, 61% African Americans, placed in jobs.

Those jobs pay as high as \$18.85 an hour (that was underground construction workers at the MMSD) and actually average \$14.82 an hour, plus benefits.

Over two years of more than three dozen training programs and job-connecting resources, WRTP has added 809 community residents to good paying jobs, 226 through BIG STEP training that generally provides instant jobs.

In 17 months ending January 2007, figures from the Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards reveal, WRTP's efforts ensured that nearly a quarter construction apprentices here were people of color, successful survivors of detailed polish in a variety of skills.

The main reason WRTP now

WRTP continued Page 12



MCLC Secretary-Treasurer Sheila Cochran and Mayor Barrett grab a moment to confer at the WRTP gathering.

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Bus drivers reject county shenanigans and contract

Milwaukee's transit bus drivers are tired of going around in circles. Especially when the circle turns out to be downward death spiral in wages and benefits, aimed at the most vulnerable among them.

On April 5, by an overwhelming 685-119 vote, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 998 (ATU) rejected what the company called its last best offer. The vote reflects how aggressively the workers intend to stand up for their 600 retirees while trying to protect new hires.

On Friday the 13th, while continuing to meet with a federal mediator inside the Downtown Transit Center on Michigan Ave. (two blocks from the Summerfest entrance), the union members by the dozen, bringing children along, took to their feet for an informational picket in the early morning sun.

At this point, say local spokesmen including President Richard Riley, the local has not voted for a strike but demands movement on a new three-year contract.

The bus issue is dizzying. County leaders seem in a muddle on a long-term solution. So far they have resisted getting behind any of a range of proposals to link rubber tire and rail and actually carry Milwaukee workers to jobs around the county or into the suburbs.

The union has been open to

a range of proposals that would strengthen their involvement and expand necessary routes, which have been cut over the last four years in various budget ploys.

There are actually some good ideas out there, and openness among many governmental units to discuss better service. But County Executive Scott Walker has resisted any light rail ideas or pragmatic ways to expand rubber tire routes.

But he's not physically on the other side of the bargaining table. He is the man behind the curtain who expects the transit bargainers to do his bidding.

The county drivers, mechanics and related workers are in the county budget, but they are not county employees because of a longtime deal with the Milwaukee Transport Services company to operate the busses.

The veteran leaders of MTS quit last year, apparently out of frustration that Walker hasn't given them a freer hand in negotiations and monetary solutions.

But Walker has made it clear again and again that he wants to end or badly weaken the health care of not only the nearly 1,000 active members but also the retirees, and eliminate or drastically cut benefits for any new hires.

Under previous contracts the workers don't pay for health care premiums or deductibles, but



Families joined ATU drivers in a Downtown informational picket.

they do for co-pays, and it doesn't take a genius to realize that older workers and retirees pay for a lot more doctor and pharmacy visits. The workers — and here's a familiar story to unions — agreed to the health care ride in exchange for accepting sizeable limits on pay increases.

The new proposal put for-

ward by the company hits the local on both wages and health care, and it seemed fashion more to deal with Walker than the workers.

It offered workers and retirees two dead-end forks in the road. One fork would make them pay 10% of the premiums, which one worker told me represented hundreds of dollars a month for retirees on a fixed income.

The other option is a lower premium percentage to start, but with a \$900 a year deductible, higher co-pays and no limit on how the premium cost would rise in the future. The contract would also eliminate retirement health care for new hires and, on top of that, only offer pay raises below 1% a year for three years.

The signs during the Friday the 13th march spelled out the outrage. The drivers are not about to abandon the retirees who built the system and took the poor pay raises to protect their twilight years. And while it's not a two-tier pay system, it's a "two-tier benefit system" by cutting new workers out of retirement protection.

Spokesmen for the local, including Le Ann Miner and Brandon Jensen (he is a member of the Milwaukee County Labor Council's executive board), have indicated the union is willing to accommodate the concerns about health premiums, but not with such a huge financial hit and no controls. Though the MTS said the rejected contract was a final offer, it, too, says it's willing to negotiate. Both sides are meeting with the federal mediator, but at this point separately.

County Board members, stuck on the sidelines, say that plans for a more comprehensive mass transit system, with the local's involvement, are desperately needed for the community, as are dedicated sources of funding that recognize the regional needs, so far resisted by the encircling counties.

Walker, committed to a property tax freeze even as county services and structures deteriorate around him, tries to blame the five year old pension scandal for the county's problems.

And the bus goes round and round.

Bowling Finals

MCLC MIXED SENIOR BOWLING

FINAL 2007 RESULTS	WINS	LOSSES
TEAM		
GUTTER RATS		
"CHAMPS"	121	89
1 BOARD OVER	112.5	97.5
LABORERS 113	111	99
CRAZY 8's	104.5	105.5
8 BALLS	97	113
SLAMMERS	84	119

IND. HIGH SERIES OVER 475	SCORE
BOB WAGNER	619
SAM SAMUELSON	609
DAN LAACK	599
DON WIEDMANN	586
GEORGE BARAK	524
DEL GROSS	524
TONY SANFELIPPO	507
JOHN PADRON	501
HANK ZEISSE	481

IND. HIGH GAME OVER 180	SCORE
BOB WAGNER	241
DON WIEDMANN	235
SAM SAMUELSON	224
DAN LAACK	223
WAYNE FRANZEN	214
WALLY GEISE	205
GEORGE BARAK	202
DEL GROSS	200
JOHN PADRON	190
ELMER HELM	181

IND. HIGH SERIES OVER 400	SCORE
RAE MATOWSKI	502
PHYLLIS NAVARRETE	476
ELAINE KARIER	428
LAVERNE WERNER	405

IND. HIGH GAME OVER 160	SCORE
RAE MATOWSKI	175
PHYLLIS NAVARRETE	174
LAVERNE WERNER	166
ELAINE KARIER	166

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APRI legend uses past to shape the future

Norman Hill's eyesight has failed, "but there's nothing wrong with his brain, is there?" noted Mary Jo Avery, a leader of the Milwaukee chapter of the A. Philip Randolph Institute (APRI).

Nor his memory, though few in the Laborers 113 Hall on Appleton Ave. Saturday, April 14, got a clue from Hill how deeply he was personally involved in the civil rights events he recounted.

Hill, president emeritus of APRI, which under his tenure added hundreds of chapters around the nation, had answered the call of the Milwaukee chapter to help its recruitment drive for new members. The help came as central raconteur in a daylong event with breakfast and buffet lunch, drawing in young people and special guests.

Avery, a member of the MCLC executive board, in introducing Hill noted he had never turned down a call for help. Which is also a miniature

description of his long career in labor and civil rights causes.

He had worked as a staff organizer at the watershed 1963 march to D.C. (where chief organizer Randolph gave a pretty good speech, overshadowed by a little effort by a young preacher named King). With Randolph and Bayard Rustin he worked on many causes before taking over the institute they had founded to bring civil rights and labor together through the activity of union members.

Hill gave Milwaukee a taste of what he is noted for at national conventions, taking listeners through the key events and the key reasons for the events in the struggle for civil rights and minority labor power in American. (It would be nice to pretend that the two causes were always in sync.)

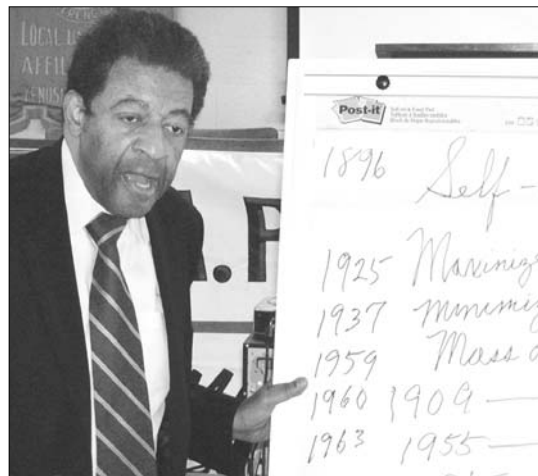
With professorial style, encouraging call and answer from the audience, he marked the watersheds to make larger points.

Norman Hill maps out the crucial years in civil rights and labor advances.

He was not born in 1909, one watershed, the founding year of the NAACP, nor in 1925 when Randolph began the fight for the first black-led union, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. He was only 4 years old when that union won its fight with Pullman, and he was too young when Randolph's stubbornness shamed two presidents, Roosevelt and Truman, to end discrimination (in government hiring and the military, respectively).

But Hill was there as witness or participant in the turbulence of the late 1950s and the 1960s — and he charted for the Milwaukee listeners the arc of gains and setbacks. Today, along with serving as a bridge between civil rights and labor, the APRI has taken a lead in voter drives and identifying candidates who truly support such mutual gains. Hill seemed to be particularly pleased that so many young people were there, emphasizing the lesson that progress requires demand and how it's their turn to get involved.

After the lunch, the future was charted by MCLC Secretary-Treasurer Sheila D. Cochran. Also speaking were David Newby, president of the state AFL-CIO, and Milwaukee Ald. Joe Davis.



To join the Milwaukee chapter or learn more about APRI, contact **Nacarci Feaster, financial secretary-treasurer of Laborers Local 113 (and also an MCLC board member) at (414) 873-4520, or Lynnda Guyton of the Milwaukee Labor Press, (414) 771-7070.**

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Calendar

Friday, April 27

Workers Memorial Day Annual Event

Join us in Mourning the Dead, Fighting for the Living
Special ceremonies 5 p.m. Zeidler Union Square Park

Tuesday, May 1

A Day Without Latinos

Mass march for immigration reform and worker protection starts at noon at Voces de La Frontera, 1027 S. 5th St., and wends to Veterans Park. Speakers include NAACP leader Craig Oliver; Cesar Chavez's brother Ricardo, and noted folk performer Utah Phillips.

Wednesday, May 2

Delegate Meeting

Milwaukee County Labor Council AFL-CIO
6:30 p.m., Serb Hall, 5101 W. Oklahoma Ave.

Sunday, May 6

Bay View Tragedy Remembrance

3 p.m., Bay View Historical Marker,
corner of S. Superior St. and E. Russell Ave
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633 S. HAWLEY ROAD MILWAUKEE, WI 53214

Published Monthly by the Milwaukee County Labor Council AFL-CIO
www.milwaukeeelabor.org

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THE MILWAUKEE LABOR PRESS (USPS 350-360) is published once a month by the Milwaukee County Labor Council AFL-CIO, 633 S. Hawley Rd., Milwaukee, WI 53214, and is also available by subscription for \$12 a year. Non-profit periodical postage paid at Milwaukee, WI.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the MILWAUKEE LABOR PRESS, 633 S. Hawley Rd., Suite 110, Milwaukee, WI 53214.

The Publisher reserves the right to refuse or discontinue any advertisement which is deemed objectionable. Publication of advertisements is not to be construed as a personal endorsement nor are all ads necessarily from unionized companies or services of the Milwaukee County Labor Council or any of its affiliates. COPY DEADLINE: Usually by noon 3rd Monday of each month except December (2nd Monday).

NLRB orders hearing into election tampering

When last we encountered picket signs from Operating Engineers Local 139, they were popping up around the community to shadow repair trucks from American State Equipment.

When next we hear about this case it will be May 2 — a hearing ordered by the National Labor Relations Board's Milwaukee Region 30. Examiners from Region 30 found merit in the union's complaints of how American State management tampered with an organizing election.

A hearing has to be held because management denies it acted illegally. Otherwise the case would move expeditiously to the remedy stage.

The mobile pickets were in the support of the workers at American State. The hearing puts the case before an administrative law judge to gather testimony and evidence and then rule on

penalties and remedies. The hearing alone represents a victory for the union but also reflects the arduous slow route of justice under current labor laws.

The workforce involved is small, about 30 workers at the company's Milwaukee and Wausau facilities. But the case looms as another backdrop to the national fight to pass the Employee Free Choice Act, which already has cleared the House. Republicans in the Senate have threatened to "go nuclear" (filibuster) and President Bush has put the EFCA on the long list of bipartisan, majority-supported legislation he threatens to veto.

Had EFCA been in place last December, when the vast majority of American State workers supported unionizing, tampering couldn't have happened. A simple majority choice of workers — which the union had, in fact it had nearly unani-

mous support — would have prevented the company from two months of intense pressure.

Bullying to bribery is cited in Local 139's complaint. And while it takes a long time and companies can employ many legalese delaying tactics, the NLRB is not happy when its own supervised elections are tampered with.

Among the complaint specifics: A supervisor threatened to lay off less experienced employees if the union was voted in. Employees were warned that they would be required to travel more frequently away from the home area should they support a union. The company gave unprecedented \$3-an-hour raises selectively to key employees with the intent of diminishing their union support.

The union lost the NLRB-supervised election by one vote, which spurred Local 139's investigation, formal complaints, and the decision to inform the community through mobile pickets. A March 22 picket line set up by the union at Michigan and 10th streets in Milwaukee briefly halted work that day on the high-profile Marquette Interchange proj-



The standard complaint is that union meetings are poorly attended, but Dave Beckmann, communications director for Local 139, offers photo evidence to the contrary for his local. The March meeting at the Pewaukee hall was standing room only as more than 320 members crowded in.

ect. In fact, Marquette Contractors wound up turning to another mechanic than American State to repair machinery.

Local 139 Business Manager Terrance E. McGowan welcomed the NLRB support of the union complaints but pointed out the larger truth that every workplace deserves a shot at organizing "not tainted by such illegal tactics."

Until the results of the May 2 hearing are in, Local 139 will continue to urge its signatory contrac-

tors to voluntarily stop using American State services.

The choices available to an administrative law judge include throwing out the results of the original Jan. 12 election and ordering a new election.

A statewide trade union, Operating Engineers Local 139 represents operators and mechanics of heavy construction equipment.

It has some 9,200 active and retired members.

Labor groups tell Assembly to back off casino meddling

Imposing legislative approval into Native American casino projects has been soundly rejected in letters from the Milwaukee County Labor Council, AFL-CIO, representing 47,000 workers in 135 locals, and other labor groups such as the Milwaukee Building & Construction Trades Council (MBCTC), AFL-CIO, representing 20,000 workers.

"We should be focusing on legislation that encourages job growth, not something like AB 205 that would throw obstacles in its way," MCLC's chief operating officer, Sheila D. Cochran, wrote Assembly leaders on behalf of the council.

The Kenosha off-reservation entertainment and casino project proposed by the Menominee Indian Tribes has won approval from Kenosha voters and already faces oversight by the federal government and Gov. Doyle. Neither is a slam dunk. To these hurdles, the GOP in the legislature wants to add roadblocks never imposed on a Republican governor.

If approved, the casino project has already agreed to providing some 3,000 union jobs.

In an earlier letter, Lyle Balistreri of MBCTC reaffirmed support for "projects that bring good paying jobs to our area workers."

"AB 205 is bad for Kenosha, bad for our region and bad for the state of Wisconsin," he said. "It's a bad piece of legislation that should be tabled."



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Circuit City cavalierly short-circuits American dream

Called by newspapers the most extraordinary layoff announcement in memory and a wrenching apart of the corporate safety and social net, the action was even more than that. It upended any expectation that good work and seniority were protection even at profitable companies.

"I thought the raises I had gotten meant the bosses were pleased with my work," commented noted author Barbara Ehrenreich. "What they meant was that I was doomed."

Circuit City, which has three outlets in the Milwaukee area, announced it was laying off 3,400 workers at its national chain of stores, admitting they were good workers, some of their top service and customer people, many veterans of decades. They would be replaced for no other reason than Circuit City wants to find lower-paid workers.

And oh yes, after a 10 week layoff, the fired workers were welcome to reapply for jobs at much lower pay.

These were employees making \$10 to \$20 an hour. They were non-union, of course, meaning they had no contractual protection. Such "at-will employees" can be fired for no reason or for a very bad reason.

Still, it was unions that rallied around these workers and publicized the company's actions in communities, holding informational pickets in many locations to inform the customers, who often turned right around and drove to another store.

In fact, it would be hard to find a bigger spur to organize than the action at Circuit City. It was a lot blunter and crueler than a similar thing that is happening at Wal-Mart, which has set wage caps on certain jobs while requiring weekend and night work as a sudden new requirement.

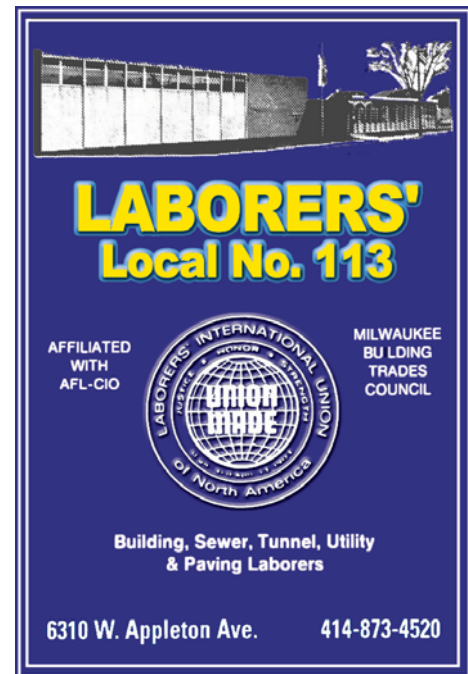
That fits a leaked memo from a Wal-Mart executive questioning the value of longevity and why the cost of an employee with seven years of tenure should be higher than

the cost of a new employee. And similarly, Toyota workers hear rumblings of a similar policy at US plants — only here it would be to replace veteran or injured workers with temps.

Circuit City offered an almost ludicrous defense, that some of its managers had violated its internal "pay scales" for certain jobs. To which one manager responded that "it seemed the decent thing to do" to reward good workers with better pay.

Economists point out that this is a totally self-defeating philosophy. It will be hard for Circuit City or similar companies to attract employees with any sense of pride or loyalty. Unless, of course, they see a value in tearing apart the basic fabric of why people work and strive.

As Ehrenreich noted with dripping sarcasm, "Once you fire the high-performers and experienced workers, the next step will be to demand that employees pay you for the privilege of working."
-- D.P.N.



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Tough language at Tramont

The fair-haired boy of Milwaukee manufacturing wound up hip-deep in dandruff in April. It took several rallies and protests this spring, joined by community groups angered by central issues of discrimination and worker rights, before a new union contract quizzed some of the key complaints buzzing around the company.

Tramont, a maker of diesel tanks and related metal products, has seen demand and profits soar since its 2004 first-ever contract with Local 1103 of UE (United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America). It's increased its workforce by a third, though workers had not shared in this profit boom. It opened a south side facility to go with its Riverwest manufacturing center.

And it worked with MATC to emphasize skills training and carry W-2 clients and others from the community to real jobs. This initial training program may have added only 13 welders, but it drew considerable favorable publicity for addressing through the resident community a shortage of skilled workers that, Tramont said, forced it to turn down \$10 million in business for its generator line.

One reason for the publicity was that Tramont helped turn around the sense of failure attached to the conversion of North Division High into three small schools. The project revitalized welding space within one, Genesis High School. Another plus was Tramont's guarantee of employment, depending on a later three-month company evaluation, for workers completing the MATC course.

All this brought Mayor Tom Barrett to the Riverwest plant for his State of the City speech in which he unveiled a central role for City Hall in future workforce

development and initiatives in mass transit to connect workers to jobs and tourists to destinations.

Tramont CEO Sean McGowan, pushed as a candidate by the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce, even came within one vote of being added to the MATC board.

Only in March did some hard facts bring down to earth this parade of good vibes and raise doubts about just how much the community at large as well as the veteran workers have shared in Tramont's growth and image of good citizenship.

Union research revealed that Tramont's average pay in key categories (welders, operators, assemblers) range \$2 to \$4 an hour below the Milwaukee fair market value recorded by the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, the US Department of Labor and even the MMAC. While \$12.50 an hour seemed like a godsend for residents who long struggled before the MATC program, it is \$5 below what the state recommends for this specialized training.

Not just contract negotiations revealed the negative impact of pay rates. Workers' feet going out the door were another sign. High turnover is a cost for any company, another dampener on perception that Tramont is a great place to work — and certainly was a core concern in union negotiations, as was a litany of complaints about sexual harassment and race-ethnicity discrimination among the largely Latino and African American workforce.

UE was particularly distressed that Tramont was seeking to remove some hard-won contract language that protects workers. That language is a “no-

match” clause, borrowed straight from other unions with high levels of Latino workers (in this case UNITE HERE).

“No-match” is the name given to letters routinely sent companies by the Social Security Administration (SSA) reflecting a discrepancy between the name and the Social Security number it has on file. The knee-jerk reaction of xenophobes is that a “no-match” must mean an illegal immigrant, but both the Department of Justice and the SSA are at pains to debunk that and explicitly caution employers not to take any adverse action against an employee because of this administrative letter.

In fact, companies that do are exposing themselves to legal penalties.

The reasons for a “no-match” are many: A clerical error, the confusion inherent within multiple government databases, a worker with residency permit stuck in the three to five year delay of the current immigration process, and so forth.

Voces de la Frontera, the worker rights center among the community groups who were marching with UE in protest against Tramont's efforts to remove this clause, points out that unscrupulous employers have used no-match letters to fire workers, despite the federal warning not to.

Protective language in a contract reassures workers that they will be given time to resolve any issue. The clause also protects the company if the



Angry in the rain and cold, unions and community groups joined UE's Mark Meinster in a rally outside Tramont's Riverwest plant.

immigration law changes.

“It's just coercive — an effort at intimidating the workers — to insist on removing it,” said Mark Meinster, an international representative for UE deeply involved in the bargaining.

The union stood so tough on the workers rights issues it wouldn't deal with wages until those were settled. It gained April 7 when the workers ratified.

The no-match clause remains within the new three-year contract. The wages for the 230 workers are creeping closer toward the middle of the general recommendations — 40 cents an hour raise in the first year, then 35 cents in each of the next two

years.

The company is addressing the sexual harassment complaint, Meinster said, but the discrimination grievances? “We expect this to be an on-going problem at Tramont given the company's past unwillingness to solve the problem,” said Meinster.

All in all it's “a decent deal considering this is only our second contract,” said Meinster.

As for the high departure rate, no one can predict, he said, “but hopefully this will reduce turnover.”

“We are starting right now to strengthen the union for the next contract,” said Meinster — and close the wage gap.

-- Dominique Paul Noth

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FAMILY LAW? Let's talk about that. This Mitchell Park rally by the Latino community included children, American citizens, whose mothers are being deported after a sheriff-led raid in Whitewater that rounded up veteran workers at a package plant. The rally also featured the owners of the plant who thought they were following the rules and are now facing bankrupting fines. The human side of the immigration reform dilemma will be a primary theme of the massive rally planned May 1 by Voces de la Frontera from its headquarters on S. 5th St. to Downtown. Details on Page 4.

— Photo by Sue Ruggles



ABOVE: 200 union and community leaders stood in this large sloping lot in Park East overlooking sites across Water St. where the city has provided large TIFs. Now, fulfilling the conditions of the PERC (the county-sponsored Park East Redevelopment Compact, a ground-breaking community benefits initiative), RSC & Associates is promising prevailing wage construction and first crack for residents at jobs within an expanded apartment-retail-hotel project. If the city provides a small TIF. City officials have balked because the concept is too large under a master plan, but Ald. Mike D'Amato disagrees. His Common Council resolution would study providing a \$9.5 million TIF. The Chicago developer says its larger Park East Square would generate \$15.4 million in property taxes in a decade, create 310 construction jobs during the project and provide 200 retail and hotel jobs afterward. The rally was organized by the Good Jobs and Livable Neighborhoods Coalition.



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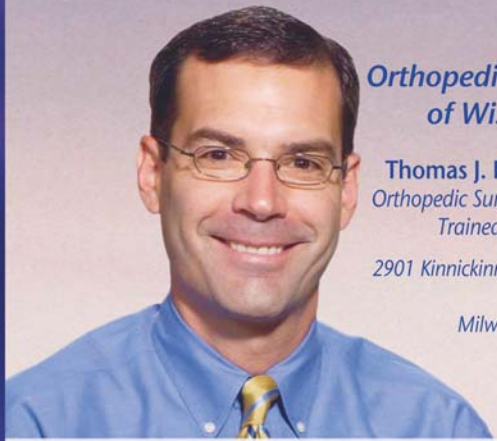
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Delegates ready if Butler needs backing

By Dominique Paul Noth, Editor, Labor Press

In March, the labor council felt honored when Louis Butler agreed to induct the newly elected officers and board at the monthly delegate meeting April 4. But not just the election on April 3 made the participation of the Wisconsin Supreme Court justice especially timely and newsworthy.

Butler, appointed by Gov. Doyle to serve as the court's first African American member, a former municipal and circuit court judge who has always enjoyed ardent labor support, found himself all over the news columns within hours after the April 3 election.

Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce, which had spent millions of dollars in third-party ads to trumpet a "law and order theme" — helping J. B. Van Hollen sneak to victory in 2006 as attorney general and Annette Ziegler run away with a victory April 3 to join Butler on the supreme court — was openly crowing that the next candidate in its gun sights was Butler, who will be running for a full 10-year term next April.

The WMC theory is that the election of Ziegler didn't change much, since she replaces a conservative justice, but the balance of the court could be affected in big business' favor for years by ousting Butler, one of those justices who believes that \$350,000 is not sufficient lifelong compensation when a hospital sticks a needle in a worker's spine and paralyzes him for life.

While the delegate meeting was a festive event, with several speakers and much laughter, Butler also found himself surrounded by delegates, elected officials and assorted other well-wishers who hugged him, patted him on the shoulder and told him again and again variations on the same theme: "We've got your back."

Mild and studious in manner, a master of discretion and decorum in conversation, Butler is certainly one justice who knows when to recuse himself. So he was not about to be drawn into discussions of personalities and politics. He did indicate distress at how much money and negativities seemed to dominate the 2007 Wisconsin



Labor cartoonist Mike Konopacki envisions what Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce has in store for Butler. Organized labor intends to stand in the way.

Supreme Court campaign.

And he did point out that education about what a justice actually does ought to become more important and even dominant in future races. The role is not sentencing felons, but balancing the nuances of legislation and the constitution with the rights of all citizens and entities. "So if you find someone who is really a great law and order trial judge," Butler said with a twinkle, "maybe they should stay right there to continue to do that."

The meeting at Serb Hall was full of savvy political insiders, some who thought Butler had better be prepared for the worst, others who think the WMC is puffing itself up with smoke — "and would be better spending those millions on creating new jobs for a change," as one delegate put it.

But all agree that April 2008 will produce quite a different race, if a race emerges.

First, Butler is a seasoned campaigner. He was steered for racial baiting in his Milwaukee circuit court race. And back in 2000, when he did run for supreme court against Diane Sykes, that campaign remains a model of civility and judicial restraint. (And notably it came a year after a particularly acrimonious supreme contest.)

Both Sykes and Butler agreed to accept the state's \$215,000 limits on campaign spending at the time, and both emphasized judicial philosophy and issues. And while Sykes won, Butler established a statewide name and respect from all camps, so it would be hard to paint him as a demon now.

Many on both sides found it poetic justice when Butler was appointed to replace Sykes when she was nominated to the federal bench.

Moreover, the politically savvy pointed out, next April will be a busy election season involving mayors, county executives, aldermen, supervisors and more, turning the supreme court contest into a diffused not lonely spotlight as it was in 2007.

Butler's reputation — he was Wisconsin's first public defender to argue a case before the US Supreme Court; he has spent much of public life teaching judicial thinking to other judges — has also created reluctance to face him. Insiders and media reports suggest that judges approached by the WMC have already declined to run against him.

But what the labor people were making clear to Butler, who has hardly spent any time raising money for a campaign, was that they will be there should those third-party forces try to engage in ugly battle.

Butler hung around after the induction for a range of other speakers, many of whom indirectly were making related points. Phil Neunfeldt, the secretary-treasurer of the state AFL-CIO — and a newly inducted returning delegate — rang out example after example of how union involvement in elections had changed both Madison and D.C. for the better and that more legislative battles will have to be joined.

(As pointed emphasis, Neunfeldt noted the presence in the audience of a former delegate and union member, Sen. Spencer Coggs, now the leader of the senate labor committee. "You can hardly find an example of a bigger change than moving from Tom Reynolds to Spencer Coggs.")

Acknowledging that it was a rarity to praise business leaders or even invite them to address the labor council, or even to have them accept, MCLC Secretary-Treasurer Sheila Cochran introduced "my currently favorite CEO," Tim Sullivan of Bucyrus International.

After joking that he was writing a memo to himself — "Note: Never ever follow Phil on a program" — Sullivan

started the assembly when he criticized fellow business leaders who opposed unionized workforces. "I just don't get it," he said. "They look at you and they see a problem. I look at you and see the solution."

He reiterated why Bucyrus had decided to stay in Milwaukee and commit to new facilities here, praising the steelworkers at his plant as "the best workforce in America" and noting the presence of USW Local 1343's president, Dewell Lewis, in the house.

But if you look honestly, Sullivan noted, this was a bottom-line boardroom decision. He recalled that "we seriously explored moving — there was a nonunion plant in Texas, but it took them twice as many workers to get the productivity we have here. So in economic terms, that sort of choice is easy."

Sullivan didn't hesitate to worry aloud about the future problems — how to keep trained productive workers in the pipeline and how to find and train new welders as its business expands. In these areas, he noted, both the community and the unions are helping.

"So, I still don't get it," he said, referring to businesses that try to work around not with their employees. Bucyrus has just bought a German mining equipment plant and had two German leaders visit the US for a tour. But in Germany, he said, a union workforce and labor-management cooperation are commonplace, "so they were perplexed and troubled by the hostility they encountered among American business leaders."

Sullivan's comments were impromptu, because what he really had wanted to talk about first he kept to the end — the United Way. He is a leader in the community campaign, as is Cochran, and "I'm troubled that other cities of similar size do better than we do." He also hinted that continuing troubled times may lead United Way to raise its new goal by \$5 to \$10 million.

Last year, he said, union giving went up, and he complimented the Milwaukee County Labor Council for the turnaround, signaling out field mobilizers Mike Balistriere, Jay Reinke and Annie Wacker.

"But we have so many people in profound need and trouble that it challenges all of us," he said. "Once again, labor — the people who have the jobs, even sometimes low-paying jobs — are the ones we rely on for sympathy and generosity. They do get it."



State AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Phil Neunfeldt was busy outlining union successes, both at the delegate meeting and the W RTP press conference. More photos on Page 15.

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He was not supported by the labor council — in fact, Jeff Spence was roundly criticized for his lapses in campaign finance reporting. But the re-elected MPS board member showed up at the delegate meeting to express interest in an education forum. The "mend fences" attitude — in a seat he won by merely 300 votes — was appreciated by board member Candice Owley and (right) President Willie D. Ellis.

Full instant election coverage remains at www.milwaukeeelabor.org, where Labor Press regularly breaks news and events between print editions.



See story opposite page
LEFT: Butler donned full official robes to swear in the board and officers for two-year terms. Who are they? See Page 4 masthead for a full list.



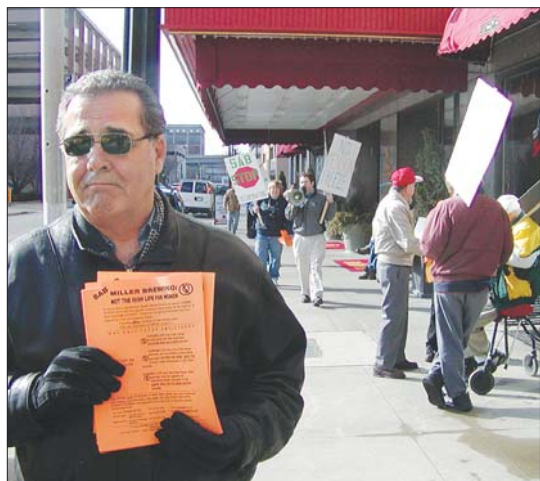
RIGHT: Applauded by the floor for years of great service on the board, USW's Doug Drake proved his voluntary departure won't halt his active service. Here he took the mike to push for more participating in LERA, the national labor relations organization.




Those Miller Women are everywhere!

And they're turning up the heat. Jan Wilson, chief steward of the Miller Women of OPEIU Local 35, regaled delegates with accounts of the pressure on the brewery execs for attempting to freeze the pensions of a largely older, largely female clerical staff. (Listening behind her is campaign organizer Brady Bailo.) She also thanked the


numerous unions, within and outside Miller, who have joined their multiple rallies and campaigns at sports events and meeting places. That includes a notable one (below left) at the Hilton Hotel while the Tavern League was meeting. Board member Bill Christianson of the machinists, plus UFCW workers and many others, participated. Turns out the union had supporters within the Tavern League membership as well. You can join their rallies for real or on the Internet. Go to www.MillerWomen.com and become part of an amusing "virtual picket" where you can choose the sign you want to carry by gender.





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WRTP

From Page 1

seeks media hoopla for those numbers is to get everyone to do more, particularly businesses that need workers who stick and develop, which WRTP seems to make happen in abundance.

As a model of quiet effective operation, WRTP believes that doing the training right for the companies and funds already in play will be vital to prove to the world of companies out there that the Milwaukee region is indeed a smart place to locate. And the best cheerleaders are happy businesses themselves.

WRTP was one of the first and most effective in responding to the “demographic shift in our society” to minority workers, said Mike Fabishak, speaking for one of BIG STEP’s strongest funding arms and partners, the 500 firms of the Associated General Contractors. “They’ve created a model not just for our community but for others.”

Its results beat back defeatist social attitudes — that Milwaukee’s legions of unemployed were not employable or lacked a work ethic. By emphasizing that effort will lead to a job, WRTP is piling up residents who want to work, can work, do learn and advance and stay glued to the job market. That slaps down the skeptical views that still dominate the airwaves and the halls of legislation.

Walter Kunicki, speaking for

WE Energies, which expects 1,500 workers to be engaged in its regional projects by year’s end, noted that “it will be no news to anyone here that workforce development had to this point been very territorial.” He was being gentle — “divisive” would be a more accurate term.

“I don’t know the politics of how WRTP avoided that, but they have — this has been an amazingly smooth partnership,” Kunicki said.

It might see contradictory to point out that the April 16 event aimed at the media demonstrated one way WRTP has muted the politics. It pushes all its partners into the spotlight while its key administrators step into the shadows, promoting the concept but not themselves.

It also pushes the workers forward, putting a human face on the statistics. On April 16, the speakers introduced David Finner who, five years ago, connected with BIG STEP at Milwaukee Tech (even as it was converting into Bradley Tech) and today is full-fledged carpenter journeyman. His current job, ironically, is helping with renovations of the Center of Excellence itself.

Self-effacement amid self-promotion has been pretty rare in Milwaukee workforce development.

But it’s been standard for years at WRTP, and helps grow its reputation and contributions..

Two years ago, to make minority workers understand the significance of surviving hard



A clearly embarrassed carpenter, David Finner (front right), was hailed from the WRTP podium for moving from high school BIG STEP to full union expertise in five years. **More photos Page 15.**

training, WRTP took two dozen to the Pfister Hotel for a lavish ceremony. They had mastered three months of MTrans training backed in this case by the Department of Transportation and Marquette Interchange contractors as well as labor unions.

Most of those graduates are still working on the Interchange as members of the Laborers and the Operating Engineers Local 139.

Last fall, families were invited to celebrate with elected officials, teachers and companies as 23 new workers were certified in machining and welding.

Last month, Department of Workforce Development Secretary Roberta Gassman, who drove in from Madison by way of Beloit, and Common Council President Willie Hines, who only had to step outside, met apprentices for the bricklayers, the laborers and the operating engineers at City Hall.

Gino Carini, vice-president for development at J.P. Cullen, rattled off how the company and subcontractors topped every community goal — near 30% in its RPP (Resident Preference Program) for City Hall renovation, notable use of Emerging Business Enterprises and just beating to death its commitment to minority workers, who now represent a third of the hours on the enormous, multi-year City Hall project.

What made it possible, Carini said, was the involvement of BIG STEP and the WRTP. As he spoke, Rhandi Berth, the representative of WRTP, beamed, but from the background. That background is often the watchful corner inhabited by Parker and Earl Buford, the head of BIG STEP.

WRTP was begun by organized labor and its union business partners. It is still insistent that jobs pay well. But it also works seamlessly with non-union companies, demonstrating cooperation not contention. Its only agenda is good pay for good workers.

Some argue that if WRTP weren’t there, other programs would step in to connect community workers to available jobs. The reality is that a lot of programs and training centers have tried over the years and wasted money. None match the results, fiscal and psychological.

If the numbers are so good for hundreds, why not for thousands?

“To scale” is one of the phrases Eric Parker, WRTP’s executive director, throws into every conversation. WRTP trains and connects for jobs that exist. But that doesn’t mean it isn’t pushing to massively expand the job base.

But first, Parker indicates, WRTP has to prove its ability “to scale” for the businesses, philanthropies, teachers, governments and unions. It’s open to all comers. It’s expanding as a one-stop clearinghouse where willing citizens can get the most basic as well as advanced help.

But always “to scale, to scale” — prepare workers for in-demand jobs, demonstrate to companies that these sort of workers are right here in the community.

And don’t get ahead of the money invested. That’s the way to get more money and more jobs.

Parker’s standard approach is to deflect interviewers back to the key partners.

“That’s a good question,” he will say, “and we are blessed with

strong labor leaders in this community you should ask.”

Has he been meeting regularly with the mayor’s new office of workforce development? “A lot of people are advising the mayor,” said Parker, “but the most important is Donald Sykes, and you should ask him.”

A week earlier, I had talked with an outside veteran of workforce programs for minority communities. Many fail, he said, because self-aggrandizement and egos supersede purpose.

“The smartest service providers may have a dispute with a community group or a business, but you will never hear about it,” he said.

“They take it behind closed doors. They work to find a solution. When you see someone exploding in public about the people they have to work with to get funds or attention, you’re seeing a provider on the road to self-destruction. Discretion is a key to building trust.”

Parker is happy to probe the concepts in general terms — as long as he doesn’t have to point fingers.

Given the enormous needs in Milwaukee, “How do we preserve and develop good jobs, achieve access to better jobs, and do something to lift the quality of poor jobs?” he said, framing the question.

“We need to look at the whole range of needs” in issues that have paralyzed work development and gaining jobs, he said, “but we can’t be overwhelmed and we have to win this effort one job at a time.”

“Labor leaders made a decision that it makes sense to work with the business community, to bring together private, philanthropic and public resources and demonstrate that, to scale, these workers can be trained to success right here in the Milwaukee community.”

“If this works” — and the numbers say it does — “it’s because we are an inclusive model. Any agency can refer candidates to us, any business willing to pay decent wages can work with us.”

“If we don’t get our act together, keeping our efforts to the scale of what is possible and what the funding intends, two things will happen. Employers will either import workers or they will export jobs.”

“We can only reverse that by proving a mutual value.”

Traditionally heavily focused on construction and manufacturing, WRTP now delves deeper. It offers community residents immediate employment opportunities; apprenticeship test programs; hands-on training certificate programs, and referrals to job-readiness programs such as driver’s license recovery, remedial education, and GED preparation.

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Prof From Page 1

politically difficult and dangerous than a feel-good emphasis on training and education, however worthy such efforts are for society as a whole, he said.

The regional press releases are "too much about branding and marketing when we need a muscular attack" on the chronic attitudes over 40 years that have left Milwaukee blacks isolated from opportunities, he said.

All sides have found value in the March report, even if arguing that for impact Levine has mischaracterized the larger purposes of existing and emerging policies.

Levine understands all that, but he is unbending. He is not grading on future expectations. He says he is trying to create "a more nuanced understanding" and break what he regards as the emphasis on hype.

He wants the Greater Milwaukee Committee and the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce to put money where their considerable mouths are in multiple job initiatives for local residents, support of meaningful public-private funding, an instant push for mass transit, breaking down suburban walls and an unqualified acceptance of community benefits and higher wages, "not these borderline wage ideas."

He argues that all the efforts of improving workforce training and eliminating redundancy are "just playing around the fringes" of a problem that has reached staggering proportions.

Deindustrialization of the city combined with the suburbanization of jobs combined with racial segregation. All worked together to put Milwaukee blacks in a Dracula movie.

"You hear a lot about globalization," Levine said, "but losing jobs was a two-pronged problem. The neglected prong is suburbanization of jobs, without (inviting) city blacks to get them."

His report details that the region didn't deindustrialize, just the city. There was a net manufacturing gain since the 1970s for what he calls the exurban counties (Waukesha, Washington, Ozaukee) even as white flight, segregated housing

patterns and lack of mass transit blocked African Americans from pursuing jobs. Yet the number of growingly desperate minorities in the city doubled over 35 years.

Today, the number of working-age black males stands around nearly 58,000, but only 11,500 have secured work in the exurban counties.

The city figures are the horror show. Levine's data tables rebuff how the government records unemployment data — monthly reports that make the public think unemployment hovers around 6%, 10% is real bad and 15% is time to hit the panic button.

Well, how about 45% for black males, 92% of whom within the Milwaukee region live in the city?

Levine's models can be debated, which he welcomes, because the numbers reflect yet another myth — that the jobs available are some static immovable piece. The urban-suburban ratio demonstrates this is not the case.

As one city-based legislator put it, "They want our water, but they take our jobs."

In Levine's worst models, if every job hunter in Milwaukee succeeded, there would still be 88,000 of them out of work.

In the best scenarios his tables detail, 40-45% of Milwaukee black males are without jobs, but if every one of them were put to work, excluding other races, there still would be several thousand unemployed.

Looking at all jobless Milwaukeeans, Levine says, in 2005 there were nine for every available full-time job.

Perhaps only Detroit beats us in racial segregation. Only Pittsburgh clearly beats us in black joblessness, yet Pittsburgh has double the number of blacks with post-high school education.

As Levine argues, "Even if you deal perfectly with all the problems in job training and education, that alone hardly makes a ripple."

Still, he fears that even the

mayor's new central role in workforce development and the intense training for family-supporting jobs of such programs as the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership play into the "job training charade."

His figures also indicate that far too much money has been "wasted" on black entrepreneurship, lots of heavily-funded programs to create small businesses that at 1% black job growth are "statistically meaningless." The most destructive myth, Levine emphasizes, is that "market forces" can handle this burden.

To his eyes that's nonsense, and an excuse to move slowly with flaws to combat a raging problem for Milwaukee's minority community

But there are highlights. "I wish Gov. Doyle's Milwaukee Initiative had come out before I wrote the report," he said. "I would have put in something about the most positive signs for the city in decades."

Also gaining Levine's praise is the Marquette Interchange, which fits his call for more commitment to restoring the infrastructure and providing longer-range work for citizens — "but we need a massive infusion of all this," he said.

Another effort he cites is the Resident Preference Programs (RPPs) that tie development money to family-supporting jobs for citizens. (Both efforts, incidentally, heavily involve WRTP.)

He concedes that more jobs, what some would call replacement jobs, will open up as baby boomers retire, perhaps a third of the construction and trades workforce over the next eight years.

He agrees that new workers have to be in the pipeline, suggesting that his remarks about the limitations of training are "trying to restore balance" to the discus-



Marc Levine

sion. He also agrees that not all the jobless he lists will actually pursue jobs aggressively — that there will never be zero unemployment and that there will be "hard-case unemployed" that won't go away.

But even returning to the 15% black unemployment of 35 years ago would be remarkable.

And no matter how you do the math, Levine said, there are not nearly enough jobs — today or five years down the road — to lift up the minority community.

There has to be a massive concentration by everyone on adding jobs, knocking down the attitudes that first created the growth of the suburbs and connecting Milwaukee's residents to jobs, he insists.

Levine would also like to see a deeper recognition that the labor force and the empty space in Milwaukee are a prime opportunity.

If you live on a block where 30 adults are unemployed, and you can employ even 10 of them, "What an enormous difference to the neighborhood," he said.

"Here's what we need to concentrate on: Creating a tight labor market, multiple job opportunities that people can actually connect with, and a higher social wage."

He wants a rounded regional embrace of prevailing wage thinking and community benefits — "Why shouldn't community benefits be attached to a project in Brookfield as well as Milwaukee?" — so that job creation is regarded as a universal opportunity, not some of the "make work" quick fixes that are always in the offing from local officials and businesses.

While he sees promise in the regional approach to development signaled by the M7 alliance of counties, he is deeply concerned that the city of Milwaukee, which embodies both the real problems of joblessness and the real opportunity of would-be workers, will get the short end of the regional stick — again.

A lot of that is connected to suburban resistance to something he thinks is essential to job creation and connection — mass transit.

"We are way behind other cities in revitalizing infrastructure and mass transit," he said, "and we are constantly enduring attacks on this by conservative talk radio and suburban and Madison forces. Look at Houston. If they can knock aside political resistance in a state like Texas, why are we still playing around?"

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Mayor From Page 1

his lap.
The problem of developing jobs probably always had to be integrated with safety on the street, corporate dynamism (contributions beyond building up their own profits), understanding and investment from Madison, cooperative surrounding counties, a commitment to meaningful mass transit, affordable housing, revitalized neighborhoods, racial tensions, and on and on.

With the mayor in control, no longer will workforce needs be put in an isolation booth. A broader social attack won't all stem from this one new department, but its existence forces a cohesive strategy.

Moreover, Labor Press interviews about all kinds of workforce issues keep uncovering a staggering array of rival personalities and power centers often in

conflict behind the scenes. That suggests the mayor will have to engage in some stroking and some laying down the hammer, and politically that's dangerous.

By insisting on accountability, by creating a new office of workforce development under veteran community builder Donald Sykes, the mayor — quite cheerfully, it must be said — has stepped into a hornet's nest.

Historically, a lot of elected officials have done much better by ducking responsibility.

That hasn't yet wrecked the image of County Executive Scott Walker, who actually had a bigger say in workforce initiatives since the previous board, the Private Industry Council, was attached to the county.

"And he never lifted a finger," said one supervisor, Peggy West. Other supervisors join her in decrying that Walker's tenure has seen hand-sitting or indifference

on social uplift programs "almost as if he wants to dismantle the county government."

"I'm delighted the mayor took it on," said Supervisor Gerry Broderick. "And I'm glad for Gov. Doyle's initiatives for Milwaukee. The sad truth is that Walker is causing the county to dysfunction, in effect starving the programs and then blaming someone else for that starvation. There's no sense of policy initiative and working with others, which I think Tom Barrett is much better positioned to do."

At this point, policies are evolving and the mayor is planning a smooth transition that would preserve the best programs and earmark the key players. A diverse advisory board, including some veterans from PIC and other workforce programs, is being assembled.

But critics and even pesky observers like the Labor Press aren't giving Barrett time to breathe.

Some are already carping that his plan is yet another cautious "training layer," that the government money involved is a pitance of what is needed after decades of neglect, and that the mayor hasn't set measures of what should be regarded as gains — 2%, 4%, 10% more of the jobless employed?

Obviously, it's too early and the planners deserve time. But one sign that the mayor can make a difference is how many people have come a-court-ing to his door.

On paper the mayor can do quite a bit.

He can bring the full weight of the city's multi-departments on development to bear, coordinating with his new office. These departments and alliances are deeply tied to the crisis but can no longer neglect it.

Barrett has already tapped the Milwaukee Economic Development Corporation, best known

for helping arrange loans and procedures for city developers, to serve as a fiscal conduit. He will need to wrap in the leaders of RACM (the redevelopment authority) as well as the general city development divisions, which means workforce development is another way for him to get a handle on this sprawling bureaucracy.

One of Barrett's expressed visions involves TIFs, an economic incentive using future property tax payments. Barrett wants every TIF to incorporate resident preferences in hiring — and not just for the prevailing-wage construction but for the family-supporting jobs that go into the buildings.

Could that community benefits approach extend to every development project the city is involved in?

"That's one of the things we're debating internally right now," said Vornholt, "but the mayor

has been clear he doesn't want to see jobs going to people in Waukesha — or Tennessee, for that matter — ahead of jobs for Milwaukee residents. That thinking has to drive everything we do."

Vornholt also insists that the cooperative agreement with six surrounding counties actually strengthens the mayor. The "no-poaching" agreement among the M7 alliance, as it is known, deals with "existing businesses — you can't try to steal them from communities that have them."

"But it's wide open with new businesses looking where to locate and we can compete directly," Vornholt said.

The city has some potential in this game — the largest needy workforce and probably the largest array of abandoned plants or fallow land surrounded by potential employees.

Add this to the ability to lure with TIFs and other financial incentives for businesses; the infrastructure gains represented by such projects as the Marquette Interchange; the growing retail, housing and other developments in Park East, at the Pabst, along North Avenue and in various neighborhoods; the existing development expertise and planners at City Hall; the experience in environmental remediation and the control of lake water — never underestimate the power of water politics.

Barrett has also emerged as the main Milwaukee elected official with new clout in state and federal halls, thanks to the 2006 election and his experience both in Madison and D.C.

That means where he can't command he could successfully broker. Key players in the workforce include the business community, and they are being asked to contribute more than opinions. Add in the educational institutions, the faith groups, the foundations and philanthropies.

And the organized labor community, whose leaders seem prepared to tackle their own internal dissensions to elevate the minority community.

The city system does require a cooperative Common Council, but to this point the aldermen seem supportive, though they can't be herded. It's sure not bad for them to have the action right there in City Hall.

The biggest challenge may be getting the community to believe again, to not raise false hopes, and to not let pragmatic hopes get beaten down.



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LEFT: Ald. Michael Murphy and Mayor Barrett wait their turn to speak at the W RTP press event that also featured (in sequence below) Michael Fabishak of AGC and Wally Kunicki of WE Energies. (See story on Page 12.)

RIGHT: One of the labor leaders who has pushed the W RTP concept, Lyle Balistreri, also spoke, emphasizing the everyday people W RTP helped and the capable staff behind the scenes. Listening to Balistreri was another speaker who just days earlier had addressed the MCLC delegates (see Page 10). Tim Sullivan, CEO of Bucyrus International which is seeking to find and train 200 more workers by year's end, praised W RTP for calming his frustration and proving that there were good people out there to connect with highly skilled welding jobs. W RTP Sullivan said, has "become the most important part of our recruiting."

ABC earns a big F with Brewers ad

The radio ad says these are the companies that routinely "discriminate" against workers. What would you think? Racial or sex discrimination, right? Or maybe both.

You wouldn't think "discrimination" in this case meant that a project had blocked companies that paid less in wages and benefits than their trades counterparts, or companies that have denied their own workers contracted protection, grievance procedures and collective bargaining.

You wouldn't think this was about safety, that "discrimination" meant being opposed to outfits that have long fought to put a higher ratio of apprentices on a job than construction unions deem safe.

You wouldn't think this ad was only about opening up union construction jobs to non-union companies - the same nonunion companies, incidentally, that single-handedly have clobbered genuine advances against real discrimination. Remove the non-union companies from the minority statistics compiled by UWM and the NAACP, and union companies instantly look 67% more likely to seek out Milwaukee people of color.

But that is the sort of artificial "discrimination" ABC construction is talking about in its ad in the Brewers baseball radio broadcasts.

This is the second year the national organization of "merit shops" (something akin to Wal-Mart calling its workers "associates") has taken a Brewers ad, though this one strikes listeners as far more misleading.

It's certainly hard to avoid the ad, since union workers love their Milwaukee Brewers. It's certainly more desperate, perhaps because more and more developers appreciate the quality and speed of union workers and communities like Milwaukee are turning to union proven leadership in residential training and hiring.

Phony? Duplicious? The ad certainly hit the Milwaukee Building & Construction Trades, AFL-CIO, that way. For a second year, they are preparing a counterattack, but hardly in the same vein. They have a good story - and an accurate one - to share with listeners.

-- Dominique Paul Noth



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